

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Council Housing

Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy 2025 - 2030



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Foreword

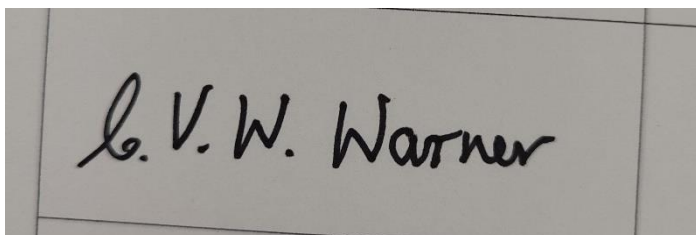
Since taking on the housing portfolio in 2023 I recognise the emphasis placed by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the new Consumer Standards on how as a Council our engagement with our tenants and leaseholders is vitally important.

I am very keen that the new legislation and standards, not only help to bolster our tenant and leaseholder engagement but renews the Council's commitment to delivering positive engagement, in all forms, with our tenants, leaseholders, staff and partners. The housing sector has had to learn from the Grenfell and Awaab Ishak tragedies, as well as the feedback from tenants across the country. As a Council, we have always been ambitious and passionate about a continuous journey of improvement for our housing service, so I am very supportive of an engagement strategy that will deliver better services and an inclusive, customer focussed culture.

This strategy aims to put our tenants and leaseholders at the very heart of our housing service, setting out how they will have a clear role in, shaping, and scrutinising our services and holding us to account to ensure the best outcomes for our tenants and leaseholders and the communities in which they live.

I recognise that the research shows that we need to listen and act on what tenants and leaseholders say and provide information and feedback; that we should provide a range of opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to get involved and these opportunities needed to be creative. I also recognise that tenants and leaseholders want their homes and their wider community to be safe and feel safe and that the communal areas of their homes and the wider community need to be maintained. I also recognise that tenants and leaseholders want a good repair service, and they want to be kept informed about repairs and improvements.

I want to ensure everything we aim to achieve is supported by the tenants`/leaseholders` voice, and those who will implement the actions. In my role as the housing portfolio holder and Chair of the Council Housing Management Board, I am excited to see how we encourage our tenants and leaseholders to get involved, what new feedback we receive and how we use that feedback to continually improve our housing service.

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "C. V. W. Warner".

Councillor Christine Warner

Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and Safer Communities and Chair of the Council Housing Management Board

Introduction

This strategy aims to improve the council's approach to listening to and working with our tenants and leaseholders.

It seeks:

- To make engagement with the council more appealing, accessible and worthwhile for tenants and leaseholders
- To encourage tenants and leaseholders to become more involved and so influence service delivery
- To encourage more and different tenants and leaseholders to proactively share their views, ideas and issues
- To support the council to listen openly and have a positive and constructive dialogue with our tenants and leaseholders
- To develop ways of measuring and evaluating the impact of tenant and leaseholder engagement to show the correlation between their involvement and improved performance in the management of estates and the quality of community life – you said, we did!

The objectives of the strategy are to build on the work that we have already done with our tenants and leaseholders such as setting up our Council Housing Management Board and Complaints Panel as well as providing more informal methods of involvement like completing an online survey. We also want to break down barriers that stop the council and our tenants and leaseholders working together to deliver high quality homes and housing services.

This strategy also details an action plan that has been coproduced with our tenants and leaseholders which will help the us achieve the objectives set out in this strategy. The progress of the strategy will be reported to tenants and leaseholders through a variety of methods such as the Council Housing Management Board, the Together with Tenants Charter Annual Report as well as updates to Cabinet and senior leadership team.

How this strategy was developed

In developing this strategy, we were keen to ensure that it was coproduced with tenants and leaseholders. To ensure that we achieved this, we asked the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) to carry out a review of our current methods of involvement and find out from our tenants and leaseholders their preferred ways of getting involved. We also wanted to know what good engagement should look like and how we can provide meaningful feedback. Our overarching aim is to ensure that our tenants and leaseholders are put at the heart of everything we do and that services continually improve.

What tenants and leaseholders told us

The research carried out by TPAS included a survey and face to face meetings with tenants and leaseholders. 109 tenants and leaseholders responded to the survey with 71% saying it was very important for tenants and leaseholders to have a real influence over the standard of housing services and other decisions about their home and community. Furthermore, just over 51% stated that they had influenced decisions about the housing service with the top three methods being: responding to a survey to provide feedback on the repairs service, making a complaint and finally, completing a general survey. The key messages identified from the research stated that:

- Tenants and leaseholders value opportunities to give their views and provide their opinions.
- Tenants and leaseholders value being listened to and being heard.
- Tenants and leaseholders expect their views to be acted on, particularly when they have been engaged with, and they want to know what has changed or not changed because of their involvement.
- Tenants and leaseholders want to know what we are doing with all the views and data that is gathered - they want regular feedback.
- Tenants and leaseholders want information and communication from us about the day-to-day issues and bigger longer-term projects.
- The repairs and maintenance service needs to be improved with better communication between our contractors, tenants and leaseholders
- There is a knowledge and communication gap with leaseholders, and we need to develop transparent communication and processes with our leaseholders particularly in relation to Section 20 consultations and the lease extension process
- There needs to be better-quality information on our website which explains how the tenant/leaseholder voice is influencing services and decisions
- There is a need for formal and informal engagement opportunities.

In summary, the key themes emerging from the review showed that we need to listen and act on what tenants and leaseholders say and provide information and feedback. Tenants and leaseholders told us they want access to a range of opportunities to get involved and these opportunities need to be creative. Our tenants and leaseholders also want their homes and their wider community to be safe and feel safe and the communal areas of their homes and the wider community need to be maintained. Lastly, they want a good repair service, and they want to be kept informed about repairs and improvements.

Our vision and objectives

We have worked closely with our tenants, leaseholders, staff and Council Housing Management Board to develop the following council housing vision:

“We aim to provide affordable homes of the right type and quality to meet the housing needs of those who are unable to meet their own needs in the housing

market now and in the future. We will work in partnership to support our tenants to prosper and improve their wellbeing and ensure neighbourhoods and communities are sustainable, safe and pleasant”.

To help embed our vision and ensure that we truly put our tenants and leaseholders at the heart of everything we do, we have developed four objectives to guide our tenant and leaseholder engagement as follows:

- Objective 1 - Listening and acting on feedback given
- Objective 2 - Providing information and feedback
- Objective 3 - Developing creative ways to involve tenants and leaseholders
- Objective 4 - Providing safe homes, safe communities

For each of the above objectives we have developed commitments which will help show our tenants and leaseholders of our intention to deliver.

Objective 1 - Listening and acting on feedback given - We will commit to:

- Listening to tenants and leaseholders and treat them with respect.
- Having a culture of respect, openness, honesty, and transparency.
- Being accountable to tenants and leaseholders, taking responsibility when things go wrong and using this to learn and improve.
- Being honest with our tenants and leaseholders about what we can and can't do.
- Making sure that our staff are available to meet our tenants and leaseholders needs in a timely manner.
- Being clear about how long it will take to solve an issue and letting our tenants and leaseholders know if things change.

Objective 2 - Providing information and feedback – We will commit to:

- Communicating with tenants and leaseholders in a way that is timely, accurate, and relevant to their needs.
- Improving our communication and providing a variety of ways for our tenants and leaseholders to get in touch with us, including face to face appointments.
- Telling our tenants and leaseholders how we spend their rent/service charges on the services we deliver.
- Informing our tenants and leaseholders how their feedback is making a difference and how we are listening to their views to make services better.
- Sharing and providing information that is accessible, clear and jargon free.
- Being transparent with tenants and leaseholders by sharing information and feedback so that they can see how we are performing.
- Producing an annual report that highlights what we have delivered during the year.

- Making sure we use the information we hold about our tenants and leaseholders ethically and securely.
- Improving how we communicate with our tenants and leaseholders about repairs.

Objective 3 - Developing creative ways to involve tenants and leaseholders –

We will commit to:

- Providing a wide range of opportunities for our tenants and leaseholders to influence how we develop and improve services.
- Taking time to understand individual tenants and leaseholders and adapt our approaches accordingly.
- Undertaking tenant and leaseholder led scrutiny projects on services and issues that have been identified through feedback and performance.
- Working with local partners and community groups to develop and deliver activities that make a difference.
- Working in partnership with our tenants and leaseholders who are members of the Council Housing Management Board so they can hold us to account on delivering the commitments we have made.

Objective 4 - Safe home, safe community – We will commit to:

- Meeting our landlord obligations to keep homes safe and warm.
- Working with our tenants and leaseholders to manage incidences of damp and mould.
- Involving our tenants and leaseholders, so they understand their responsibilities to keep their home safe for their household and neighbours.
- Recognising that safe communities are a priority for tenants and leaseholders.
- Working closely with our tenants and leaseholders living in high rise buildings to support them to raise any issues or concerns, including a tenant led building safety forum, tenant drop-in sessions, safety notice boards and safety visits.
- Carrying out the 'high rise flat annual safety programme' where we will inspect smoke detectors, heat detectors, sprinkler heads, fire doors and closer and balcony doors.
- Communal areas, where applicable, will have the fire alarm, emergency lighting, door entry systems, automatic doors, fire shutters, fire dampers, vents, automatic gates/barriers, passenger lift and smoke extract systems checked and tested for correct operation.
- Servicing gas appliances (where applicable), every 12 months to make sure they are operating correctly, and any smoke and carbon monoxide detectors will be tested and replaced, if necessary.
- Complying with regulations to service and check gas and electrics.
- Working with our tenants and leaseholders to improve local greenspaces and exploring new ways of working to do this.
- Working in partnership to effectively manage estates and neighbourhoods e.g. fly tipping.

- Undertaking an annual review of feedback about the ASB service and making changes as appropriate.
- Being clear about any follow-on works, what they are and when they will be carried out.
- Making it clear what the process is to get aids and adaptations.
- Exploring new ways of supporting tenants and leaseholders who might need additional support to maintain their home.

How to get involved

Working with our tenants and leaseholders we have developed a range of methods to encourage engagement. The methods consist of both regular and one-off activities some of which we have detailed below.

- Regular activities such as: being a tenant board member of the Council Housing Management Board, Tenant high-rise building safety inspectors or being a member of the Complaints Panel.
- One-off activities such as: completing a telephone or online survey, attending specific task and finish groups or being a mystery shopper.

Our range of methods have been designed to cater for those tenants and leaseholders who have a large amount of time to devote to engaging with us to those with only a few minutes to spare. All our engagement will have clear outcomes and tenants and leaseholders will be notified of these before they engage with us.

How we will get there

To help us achieve the above objectives we have developed an action plan which will help us deliver the commitments we have made to our tenants and leaseholders.

Objective 1 - Listening and acting	Objective 2 - Providing information and feedback	Objective 3 - Developing creative ways to involve tenants and leaseholders	Objective 4 - Safe home, safe community
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Objective				Action	Outcome	Lead	Target date
1	2	3		Develop an approach to scrutiny and ensure it feeds into the governance structure.	Governance structure encourages effective tenant and leaseholder scrutiny.	CWAC	June 2025
1	2	3		Identify statutory agencies working in our communities.	We work effectively with statutory agencies.	CWAC	June 2025
1	2	3		Identify voluntary partners and agencies working in our communities	Effective partnerships are built that benefit our tenants and leaseholders.	CWAC ForHousing	Ongoing
1	2	3		Develop ways of sharing the impact of tenant/leaseholder involvement.	Tenants/leaseholders are informed about the impact their involvement has had.	CWAC ForHousing	Ongoing
1	2	3	4	Review information on website to ensure it is accurate and up to date.	Information remains relevant and up to date.	CWAC ForHousing	Ongoing
1	2			Ensure policies are up to date and part of a review process with tenants and leaseholders.	Our policies are up to date and that tenants and leaseholders are part of the review process.	CWAC ForHousing	Ongoing
1	2			Carry out a deep dive into the underlying cause of complaints (service failure or behavioural failure).	We gain a better understanding of why complaints are happening and remedy the same.	CWAC ForHousing	Ongoing

Objective	Action	Outcome	Lead	Target date
4	Provide assurance that contractors do not stigmatise tenants and leaseholders.	Our tenants and leaseholders aren't stigmatised by any of our contractors.	CWAC ForHousing	Ongoing
4	Interrogate property compliance and safety data to ensure Board is aware of risks and is satisfied that contractors are taking appropriate actions.	The Council Housing Management Board are assured that our homes remain fully compliant and potential risks are mitigated.	CWAC ForHousing	Ongoing
1 2 3 4	Encourage a diverse range of tenants/leaseholders to get involved.	All tenants and leaseholders can get involved should they wish to.	CWAC ForHousing	Ongoing
1 2 3 4	Ensure we are compliant with the consumer standards.	We are fully compliant with the consumer standards.	CWAC ForHousing	Ongoing
1 2	Inform our tenants and leaseholders of their Right to Manage.	All tenants and leaseholders of aware of the Right to Manage and what this means.	CWAC	July 2025
1 2 3 4	Understand the nature of programmes for planned improvements or regeneration and have oversight of how tenants have influenced or are influencing these activities.	Gain an increased understanding of how tenants and leaseholders have influenced or are influencing regeneration decisions.	CWAC ForHousing	August 2025
1 2	Carry out a tenant profiling exercise that provides baseline data about who lives in our homes.	We will have a good understanding of the needs of our tenants and leaseholders.	CWAC	September 2025
1 2	Understand the diversity and specific needs of communities.	We can provide housing services that effectively meet the specific needs of our communities.	CWAC ForHousing	March 2026

Objective				Action	Outcome	Lead	Target date
1	2			Understand the communication preferences of tenants and leaseholders.	We communicate using the preferred preference for all our tenants and leaseholders.	CWAC ForHousing	March 2026
4				Gather baseline stock condition data.	We have a good understanding of our housing so that it remains safe and secure.	ForHousing	April 2026
1	2			Investigate the use of technology to support the delivery of services e.g. direct messaging services, targeted use of emails.	We use technology to communicate effectively with our tenants and leaseholders.	CWAC ForHousing	September 2026
1	2	3		Carry out a review of the service being provided to leaseholders	That the services being carried out for leaseholders meets their needs.	CWAC ForHousing	November 2026
1	2			Progress towards the Council and its contractors meeting the proposed Competence and Conduct standard.	All staff delivering housing services are appropriately qualified.	CWAC ForHousing	November 2026
1	2	3	4	Develop a set of service standards and clearly communicate with tenants and leaseholders.	Tenants and leaseholders are aware of the new estate management service standards.	CWAC ForHousing	January 2027
1	2	3		Carry out a review of the resourcing of engagement.	There are sufficient resources to deliver engagement services to our tenants and leaseholders.	CWAC	January 2027

Ensuring we deliver

To ensure that we deliver, we will report on the progress we are making against the actions in the above action plan each quarter to the Council Housing Management Board and annually to all our tenants and leaseholders as part of the Together with Tenants Charter Annual Report.

Links to our other strategies and external documents

This strategy is aligned with other Council strategies that seek to deliver actions and improve the lives of residents living in the borough.

[CWAC Borough Plan 2024 – 2028](#)

Cheshire West Place Plan

Cheshire West Council Plan 2020 – 2024

Cheshire West & Chester Council Fairer Futures Strategy

Cheshire West & Chester Council Fuel Poverty Strategy.

This strategy also links with the Together with Tenants Charter which has been developed in partnership with tenants and details our five pledges: communication; responsibility; your community; quality of your home and finally; your safety.

[Together with Tenants Charter | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)

[Regulatory Standards for Landlords, Regulator for Social Housing website](#)

[Social Housing \(Regulation\) Act 2023](#)

[Tenant Satisfaction: Standards, requirements and guidance for social landlords in England on transparency, influence and accountability, including Tenant satisfaction measures \(TSMs\)](#)